

## **EVALUATION OF BUDGET REQUEST ASSISTANCE TO MONTANA SCHOOLS**

### **JUSTIFICATION**

The Office of Public Instruction (OPI) requests six FTE and \$1,099,704 in FY 2008 and \$1,082,109 in FY 2009 to provide assistance to Montana educators in the areas of content and performance standards (what students should know and be able to do); resource materials and model curricula; accreditation requirements; continuous school improvement; accreditation of higher education teacher preparation programs; and professional development for educators. The OPI will conduct regularly scheduled on-site visits to Montana school districts to monitor, assist and support student learning ensuring a quality education for all Montana students.

The Montana Board of Public Education (BPE) defines and specifies the basic instructional program for pupils in public schools and the programs are set forth in the standards of accreditation. Mont. Code Ann. Sec. 20-7-111. The BPE adopts standards of accreditation upon the recommendation of the state superintendent of public instruction. ARM 10.55.601 (1).

Local school districts shall incorporate all content and performance standards into their curriculum. School districts shall assess the progress of all students toward achieving content and performance standards in all program areas. Assessment of all students shall be used to examine the educational program and measure its effectiveness based on the content and performance standards. ARM 10.55.603

The BPE requires that content and performance standards shall be used by school districts to develop local curriculum and assessment in all the content areas including communication arts (reading, literature, writing, speaking, listening and media literacy); arts; health enhancement; library media; mathematics; science; social studies; technology; world languages; workplace competencies; and career and vocational/technical education. The K-12 content and performance standards describe what students shall know, understand and be able to do in these content areas. ARM 10.54.2501. The BPE also requires that content and performance standards be revised on a five-year cycle so that expectations for student learning are current. ARM 10.54.2503. These standards are to be recommended by the Office of Public Instruction. Model curricula and content and performance standards were developed in the early to mid-1990s and require updating. Due to a lack of resources, only the Science Content and Performance Standards have been revised in the last five years.

The Board of Public Education requires that all Montana school districts develop, implement, evaluate, and revise a comprehensive Five-Year Comprehensive Education Plan in order to provide for continuous educational improvement. ARM 10.55.601 (2). The plans were developed in 2003 and must be revised in 2008.

Maintaining quality public schools where students achieve at high levels requires the ongoing development and revision of high-quality, relevant standards (what students should know and be able to do), ongoing research-based professional development of teachers and school administrators, reviews of higher education teacher preparation programs, and the use of current, research-based curriculum and support materials. Research consistently points to the classroom teacher as the main factor in whether or not a student succeeds. Teachers need specialized materials and teaching strategies for diverse populations including American Indian, at-risk youth, students with disabilities, etc. The role school administrators play in assuring an educationally appropriate learning environment has been well documented. They too need specialized training, professional development and resources appropriate to their position.

The proposed curriculum specialists will have an extensive background in specific academic content and curriculum areas. They will bring expertise regarding national standards and sound instructional strategies. They know and understand the teacher preparation needs of teaching candidates enrolled in the university/college teacher preparation programs. They know and are

able to deliver research-based professional development and can develop resource materials for Montana K-12 teachers and administrators. Curriculum area specialists are uniquely prepared to provide the technical assistance necessary to ensure that Montana's administrators and teachers can deliver the best possible programs and offer our students the greatest opportunity to succeed.

## **GOALS**

It is the mission of the Office of Public Instruction to improve teaching and learning through communication, collaboration, advocacy, and accountability to those we serve.

The five agency-wide goals of the Office of Public Instruction are:

- Goal 1: Support schools so that all students can achieve high standards
- Goal 2: Assess and communicate the quality and achievements of K-12 education
- Goal 3: Provide access to and management of information and data related to K-12 school improvement
- Goal 4: Deliver quality instruction through professional development
- Goal 5: Support accountability and improvement in all Montana schools

This proposal supports three of the five agency-wide goals of the Office of Public Instruction. The three goals that are targeted with this proposal are:

- ✓ Support schools so that all students can achieve high standards;
- ✓ Deliver quality instruction through professional development; and
- ✓ Support accountability and improvement.

## **PERFORMANCE CRITERIA**

By June 30, 2008, development of model curriculum in Science (Science Content and Performance Standards were revised in September 2006) and model curriculum for Full-Time Kindergarten will be completed and disseminated to Montana schools, and revisions of content and performance standards in Mathematics and Communication Arts will be completed, approved by the BPE and disseminated to all Montana school districts.

By June 30, 2008, curriculum specialists will complete development and training of school support teams to provide on-site assistance to Montana schools using effective schools research and peer reviewers. Specialists will also assist Montana educators in the revisions of their Five-Year Comprehensive Education Plans and meeting accreditation standards.

By June 30, 2009, school support teams will complete visits to 20 Montana school districts. In addition, specialists will establish an ongoing review cycle for all Montana school districts.

By June 30, 2009, a Science assessment model will be developed for use in Montana classrooms as required by ARM 10.55.603.

By June 30, 2009, model curricula in Mathematics and Communication Arts will be completed, and disseminated to all Montana school districts. Revisions of content and performance standards in Social Studies, and Library Media will be completed, approved by the BPE and disseminated to all Montana school districts.

During each year of the biennium, curriculum specialists will train team members and conduct on-site reviews of two higher education teacher preparation programs, as required for state and national accreditation of these programs. Reports of the reviews will be presented to the BPE for approval.

## **MILESTONES**

August 2007: All six curriculum specialists will be hired.

September 2007: Development and approval of timeline of activities and work plans for the rest of the fiscal year. Supervision and approval of activities will be provided on a weekly basis by the division administrator, on a monthly basis by the assistant superintendent, and on a quarterly basis by the deputy superintendent and/or the state superintendent.

September 2007 to June 2008: Development and dissemination of model Science curriculum and model curriculum for Full-Time Kindergarten. Development, approval by the BPE and dissemination of revised content and performance standards (what students should know and be able to do) in Mathematics and Communication Arts. Provide assistance to Montana educators in the revision of the Five-Year Comprehensive Education Plan.

September 2007 to June 2008: Train reviewers and conduct on-site reviews of two higher education teacher education preparation programs. Provide reports for approval to the BPE.

September 2007 to June 2008: Conduct on-site reviews of 20 school districts to provide assistance in the Five-Year Comprehensive Education Plan and meet accreditation standards.

June 2008 to November 2008: Conduct workshops for teachers on the implementation of the revised Mathematics and Communication Arts content and performance standards and model curricula for Science and Full-Time Kindergarten.

June 2008 to April 2009: Development and dissemination of model classroom assessment tools for Science and Full-Time Kindergarten.

June 2008 to April 2009: Development and dissemination of Mathematics and Communication Arts model curricula.

July 2008: Development and approval of timeline of activities and work plans for the fiscal year. Supervision and approval of activities will be provided on a weekly basis by the division administrator, on a monthly basis by the assistant superintendent, and on a quarterly basis by the deputy superintendent and/or state superintendent.

September 2008 to June 2009: Conduct on-site reviews of 20 school districts to provide assistance in the implementation and assessment of the Five-Year Comprehensive Education Plan. School support teams will be utilized.

May and June 2009: Conduct workshops for educators on the implementation of the revised standards and model curricula for Mathematics and Communication Arts and the model classroom assessment tools for Science and Full-Time Kindergarten. Train reviewers and conduct on-site reviews of two higher education teacher education preparation programs. Provide reports for approval to the BPE.

## **FTE**

The request includes six specialists in the areas of Communication Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Library, and Early Childhood Education. Specialists will work with Montana educators to revise content and performance standards, develop model curricula and classroom assessment tools, provide assistance in the revision of the Five-Year Comprehensive Education Plan, deliver professional development, conduct on-site reviews of school districts, and conduct on-site reviews of higher education teacher education preparation programs.

## **FUNDING**

This is a general fund request. No other funds are available to perform the activities outlined in this proposal. The development of content and performance standards, model curricula, classroom assessment tools, and the monitoring of higher education teacher preparation programs is the responsibility of the state in order to provide a basic system of quality public education for all Montana students. Mont. Code. Ann. Sec. 20-9-309

## **OBSTACLES**

The K-12 public education system in Montana presents a unique set of obstacles associated with student achievement, teacher and administrator professional development, program monitoring and ongoing technical assistance. Unique obstacles tend to fall into the following categories:

- (1) Geography: Montana has 430 school districts encompassing 840 schools in an area of 147,000 square miles. The impacts of this obstacle include travel time and cost. This obstacle will be mitigated by using strategies such as video-conferencing, meeting with educational cooperatives, and working through county superintendents and other education associations for mass delivery.
- (2) Size and numbers: Montana's K-12 schools vary in size from one-room, rural schools of a half-dozen students to high schools enrolling more than 2,000 students. The obstacles associated with this proposal includes developing high-quality professional development, materials and resources and science-based technical assistance, not only for elementary, middle and high schools, but for rural and urban schools, small and large schools, reservation and non-reservation, and institutional schools such as the Montana School for the Deaf and Blind and Pine Hills Correctional School. This obstacle will be mitigated through the use of Montana educators in the development of materials to meet the needs of diverse audiences and building regional capacity for delivery of professional development and resources.
- (3) Community/Agency Resources: Availability of assistance is a unique Montana obstacle. Many schools in more populous states have the advantage of a higher education unit nearby, community-based organizations for assistance, and other local, state or federal agency resources. Most Montana public schools have none of these available. Consequently, often the only means of high-quality professional development is to go out of state, the only means of technical assistance is a high priced out-of-state consultant and the only materials available are high-cost private vendors. This proposal builds capacity through work with partners such as higher education, involving the "field," and working with education associations to provide cost-effective assistance to schools. This obstacle will be mitigated through the use of partners and their various delivery mechanisms and strategies.

## **RISKS**

A statewide system of education accountability must include current standards for academic content and performance; curriculum and instructional materials aligned to the standards; assessment tools for evaluating student knowledge and performance; and processes for improving instruction to increase student achievement. If educators are to be held accountable for the delivery of a quality education, the state needs to provide resources for updating academic standards and for the efficient development of model curriculum materials for schools to use.

If all Montana students are to receive a quality education and achieve at high levels, they must be provided with current expectations for their learning, highly trained educators provided with resource materials and effective schools in which to learn. If this proposal is not funded, our students may not receive the quality education to which they are entitled and may not remain competitive in our global economy.